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"Freedom Calls" video encourages students to make the right choices

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SMYRNA, Tn – Motivational Productions, in partnership with the Tennessee National Guard Counterdrug Program will unveil their latest video, *Freedom Calls*, at the McMinn County High School in Athens, on Monday, May 7. The 40-minute presentation is designed to address the concerns of youth making the choice of personal freedom to be drug free.

Freedom Calls tells the story of a teen-aged boy named Josh whose father is serving in the National Guard and gets deployed. Through email, they talk back and forth during the video.

The National Guard approached Motivational Productions creator and producer Tony Overman in 2005 to collaborate on the product that has evolved into *Freedom Calls*. The non-profit organization uses a unique three-screen video production that incorporates music, movies and real stories to convey the message. This video is geared to students in grades 7 and 12.

"The final product is a high impact, motivational and moving production that has the ability to reach the hearts and minds of youth, teachers and parents alike," said 1st Lt. Linda Williams, Tennessee Counterdrug Drug Demand Reduction Administrator.

Josh's father encourages him to make the right choices through conviction, courage, and ambition.

A real-life example of overcoming adversity is depicted in the film. "Ashley", a teenage girl, loses both her parents to cancer at a young age. Despite this, she raises herself alone and goes on to become the valedictorian of her class.

"She is proof to students that no matter what obstacles happen in your life, if you make the right choices and set goals, you can truly achieve anything," said Lt. Williams.

"We make each film on the basis of four things that I believe each kid is looking for: feelings of being wanted, needed, accepted and loved," said Overman. "If we don't provide that for them, they will go looking for someone or something that will."

Working together, Motivational Productions and the National Guard hope to teach students that drugs and alcohol aren't the answer they are looking for. Since 9/11, many support programs have evolved for National Guard families to help them through difficult times like separations, but none have taken the unique approach to encourage youth to make smart choices in absence of a parent as *Freedom Calls* does. Both organizations are excited about the partnership.

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"The Tennessee National Guard Counterdrug Program was ready to take a more active role in our partnerships with other demand reduction organizations. Showing up in uniform gets the students' attention, but we really needed to work on the message," said Army Lt Col Byron Deel, Tennessee National Guard Counterdrug Coordinator for Tennessee. "I believe *Freedom Calls* does just that."

The National Guard Counterdrug Program operates a Drug Demand Reduction Program in all 54 states and territories, reaching millions of students across the country with anti-drug messages. Counterdrug recently underwent a tremendous transformation. Three signature programs are now the driving force behind its efforts in the fight against drugs: a science-based, measurable Drug Demand Reduction Program (of which *Freedom Calls* is a part); an information-sharing campaign with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies; and an increased global role in combating drugs.

Motivational Productions will take the video on the road and work with the National Guard in the schools to continue spreading the positive messages.

"We have to shape the futures of our children because they are the future," said Deel. "They can't succeed unless we provide the tools for them. Teaching them about their personal freedoms like this video does is one way we can and will achieve that."

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